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## THE FRENCH PAINTINGS

THE exhibition of modern French art lent by the government of France opened December 15 with a private view for members and their friends, and will remain until February 1. The general effect produced by the galleries in which the paintings hang is one of brightness and color. These happy sunlight effects, where even shadows become vibrating color, the world owes primarily to the courage and genius of a few Frenchmen, the masters of Impressionism, who introduced elusive, transitory effects of sunshine and atmosphere into the legitimate field of subjects for the painter, and who developed the principle of the division of tones as a mode of expression. While the present exhibition is by no means confined to the work of a single school, it can still be said that few paintings in the exhibition, and indeed few pictures by artists of our own America, would have been painted quite as they are if the great so-called Impressionists of France had not lived and labored.

The exhibition includes an important early work by Monet, whose influence on American landscape has been so peculiarly powerful. This painting, which is dated 1876, is one of the rare figure pieces by the artist. A tall, blonde young woman is shown standing and looking over her shoulder at the spectator. She wears an elaborately embroidered Japanese robe which is well expressed and interestingly painted, though with little presage of the methods of Monet in his better-known style.

Two canvases of superlative quality by Renoir represent fittingly the work of another of the greatest masters of modern painting. The artist's recent death lends just now a peculiar interest to these pictures. Renoir is accorded by critics a place of increasing importance in the history of French art. Without declining the use of modern methods, indeed, making a decided contribution of his own, he has carried forward the Gallic tradition of Boucher and Fragonard "The race speaks in him," writes Camille Mauclair. "Renoir is the most lyrical, the most musical of the masters of this [the Impressionist] art." The

type which he has rejoiced in is thoroughly feminine, a creature of instinct, a form supple and voluptuous within which dreams a spirit capricious and girlishly innocent. The picture dated 1881, called *The Bath*, depicts a charming woman of Renoir's favorite type holding a child on her lap. The color shows the original and sensitive qualities which helped to make the artist's work famous. The *Bather* represents a nude painted in Renoir's masterly manner seated on a rock past which water is swirling. The textures and consistencies are more carefully differentiated than in his later work.

Balancing the painting by Monet hangs on the opposite wall the impressive portrait of Cardinal Mercier by Albert Besnard. The Belgian primate is shown standing beside a large crucifix. The artist has dwelt not upon the patriot but rather upon the sensitive priest. Besnard's accustomed gusto and love of vivid color are here restrained by his theme. The painting conveys a somber effect, despite the red of the Cardinal's robe and the suggestion of battle glare in the background. The portrait was painted in Rome in 1916.

Breathing a spirit peculiarly French, a spirit which no vicissitudes can subdue, are paintings by d'Espagnat and Chéret. In the former there is humor as well as tenderness. The attitude of the child is highly expressive, while the shadowy modeling and the scheme of color seem in some mysterious way to accord perfectly with the intimacy of the subject. In the flesh tones the blue rug is skilfully brought into harmony with the red curtain. In Chéret's *Farandole*, airy figures dance a carnival with the Parisian gaiety that has made the artist's posters a joy since the days when bicycles came into vogue.

An example of refined decorative quality has been chosen to represent Albert André. An enchanted passivity has cast its spell upon the bathers. There is a classic harmony of linear movement throughout. The pleasing, tapestry-like surface quality and the sensitive feeling for color are characteristic of this talented French artist.

A study of worshipers in a church has been chosen to represent Lucien Simon.

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# BULLETIN OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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THE BATH  
BY  
PIERRE AUGUSTE RENOIR  
(SEE PAGE 8)

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ENTERED AS SECOND-CLASS MATTER, APRIL 11, 1907, AT THE POST OFFICE AT NEW YORK, N. Y., UNDER THE ACT OF AUG. 24, 1912.  
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The somber scheme of yellow, red, and black recalls the art of the Spaniards. Cottet, whose name one naturally associates with that of Simon because of their common interest in Breton folk, shows a group of picturesque women halted in a meadow on their pilgrimage to Plougastel. The scene is treated with rich color in a vein of strong optimism. It recalls a picture by the same artist, exhibited in America some years ago, showing the journey's end with the little church of St. Anne-la-Palud surrounded by thousands of white-capped Breton pilgrims.

A painting by Ménard shows a highly characteristic landscape with tints of the black opal among marsh grasses and distant woods. It has a lyric quality breathing a profound peace which almost makes the beholder aware of the classic figures which on this occasion the artist has omitted. Visitors familiar with French art gladly recognize such names as Auburtin, Dinet, Raffaëlli, and Charlot.

Henri Caro-Delvaile has supplied from his studio a nude of the type which has made him famous in the past. The strong accents of black hair and orange ribbon serve as foils to the pearly flesh tones and delicate boudoir decorations.

The tender mood of Impressionism is seen in landscapes by Henri Martin and Le Sidaner. Signac's view of the Maas bridge at Rotterdam is a good example of the more scientific pointillism.

The younger group of artists, who are responsible for the decorations of the Théâtre des Champs Élysées in Paris, have sent a number of interesting pictures, including the spirited Maidens Waylaid by Xavier Roussel, The Little Sister by Mme. Marval, and canvases by Henri Lebasque and Maurice Denis. The picnicking scene by Balande with its happy groups disposed about the lawn in marked sunshine and shadow is immediately sympathetic to Americans being in the vein of some of our own painters. Added to those just mentioned are works by such men as Bonnard, Vallotton, Zingg, Manguin, Désiré, Piot, making a truly modern exhibition, an event which cannot fail to help Americans in understanding the France of today.

H. B. W.

## CHINESE PORTRAITS

AN interesting collection of Chinese portraits, the property of Samuel T. Peters, is now on exhibition in H 11, the room where generally Japanese prints are shown. They are the formal, dignified portraits which collectors appreciate for their sober and decorative color schemes and which adapt themselves so well to our homes because they fill their place without unduly opening vistas and holes in the wall to the detriment of the architecture of the room.

Besides these excellent qualities they have also the more human ones of admirable characterization and great personality; they must have been perfect likenesses and show us the Chinese men and women of bygone ages not as poets and artists wished them to look, or as perhaps they themselves fondly believed they were like, but the people as they really were and as their relations and friends saw them. It strikes the observer immediately how un-Chinese they look: some of the women might come straight from a New England town, others are the types we daily meet. The reason perhaps is that they were posthumous portraits of which the exact likeness was the principal object; besides, the sitter him or herself had no say in the matter.

The reason why the likeness was considered all-important even to the extent that the faces had often to be repainted if the family was not thoroughly satisfied, is that their first use was at the funeral, when the portrait was hung on the wall over the catafalque and was supposed to serve more or less like the Ka figures in Egyptian tombs, as a resting place for the deceased spirit, which was present, though it had left its earthly form.

After the burial the portrait was hung up in the ancestral hall, and specially venerated on New Year's day and anniversary days; sometimes in rarer cases of prominent families it was transferred to the temple dedicated to the worship of the ancestors of the clan.

The portrait was rarely painted during the life of the sitter; generally after death the artist was called in. It was successful, thanks to the admirable artistic memory